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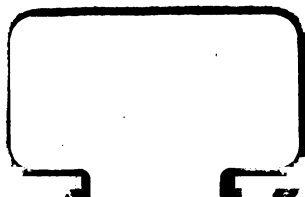
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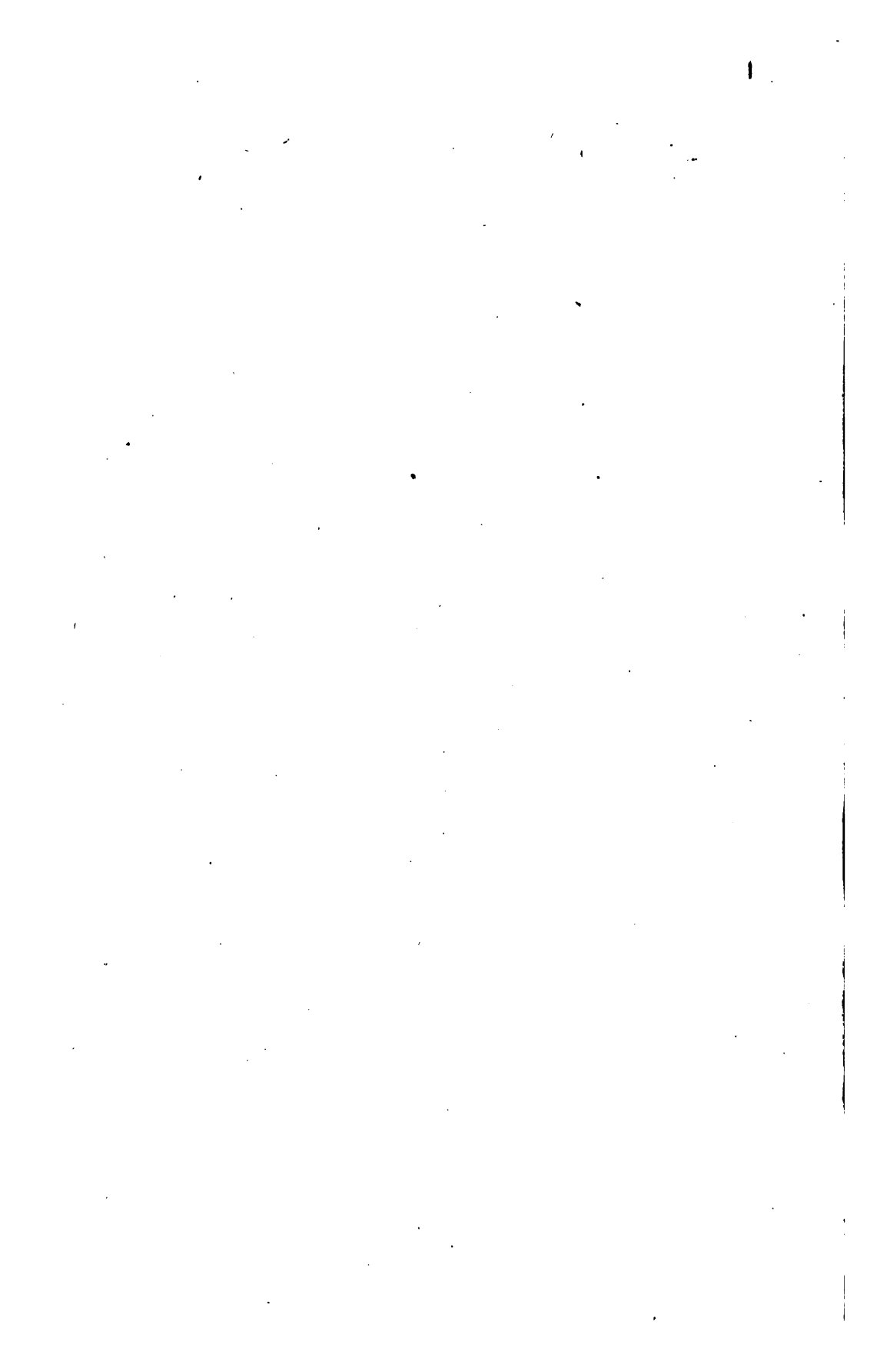
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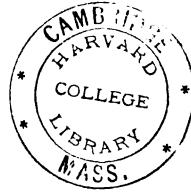




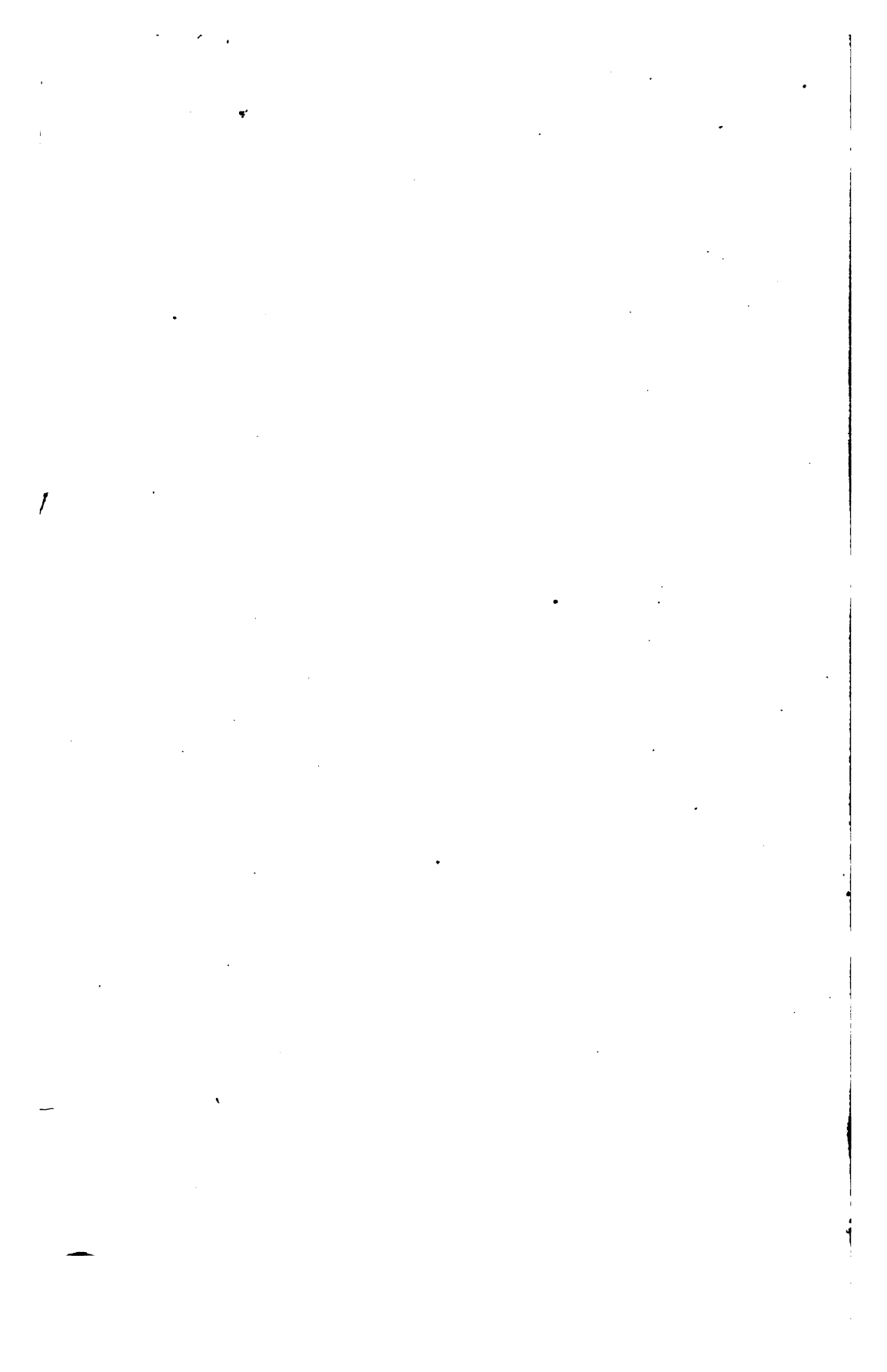


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THE
REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
IN
RUSSIA.



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REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
IN RUSSIA

REPRINTED FROM THE "NEW YORK HERALD"

WITH
NOTES AND PREFACE

BY
IVAN PANIN

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PREFACE.

The following pages contain a statement of the aims and methods of the "nihilists," by which they themselves are willing to be judged. A lamentable misapprehension prevails among Americans as to the men and women who are sacrificing their social position, their friends, their homes,—their all, to freeing their country from despotic rule. The very word "nihilist" is a misrepresentation. The members of the revolutionary party in Russia do not call themselves nihilists; nor does the government in its numerous indictments against the revolutionists speak of them under that name. Revolutionists they call themselves, revolutionists they are called by the government, and revolutionists they wish to be called by the world. It is true that Michael Bakunin and his handful of followers were nihilists pure and simple,—destroyers. But such nihilism never convulsed a nation, never shook a throne propped by 750,000 muskets! Negation alone is no more powerful in politics than in religion. Hence Bakunin could count his followers on his fingers. The present war to the knife did not need "nihilistic" teachings to make it desperate. The government alone put the dagger and the bomb into the hand of outraged manhood. Violence was resorted to by the revolutionists only after the government had literally tortured to death thousands of noble men and women solely for leaving their luxurious homes in order to go into the factories to educate the ignorant masses. For this crime were imprisoned by Prince Krapotkin alone several hundred students, half of whom became insane from ill-treatment in prison, and many of whom at last died. And all this took place

while these men were awaiting their trial where their guilt was first to be proved ! Not until such a state of affairs roused indignant humanity to white heat was assassination resorted to. Even now, the Executive Committee has offered Alexander III., in a proclamation, to suspend operations if only he should grant a constitution. Not even so moderate a demand as a republic they put forth. Only a constitution guaranteeing that no more innocent men and women be dragged forth from their homes in the dead of night to Siberia. If this is "nihilism"—nothingism, terrorism ; if this is to be branded as dastardly, as infamous, as some of the American papers amuse themselves in doing, then surely Russian patriots must acknowledge that they have totally misread American history. If, however, in spite of all this, the Russian Revolutionists must be condemned by a people whose very birth was signalized by revolution, they have a right to demand at least a hearing. "Strike, but hear me !"

These reasons induced the editor, though he is not a "nihilist" himself, to reprint what seemed to him the clearest and ablest statement about the revolutionary party in Russia that has yet appeared in the English language. For obvious reasons, the editor is unable to give the name of the gentleman whose remarks furnish the text of this publication. Should, however, any information on the subject be desired which he is at liberty to give, the editor will furnish it most cheerfully.

69 COLLEGE HOUSE,
Cambridge, Mass, Sept. 12, 1881.

AN INTERVIEW WITH A NIHILIST.

[From the *New York Herald*, Aug. 2, 1881.]

WE are enabled to lay before our readers to-day an exceedingly interesting interview with a Russian gentleman of high social standing, whose culture, wealth, and knowledge of Russian politics, give weight and influence to the views he expresses through the columns of the *Herald*. We withhold with regret his name; were it published it would be recognized as one prominently connected with the nihilist movement. He makes this concealment of his name a condition of the interview, for the reason that he does not wish his presence in this country to be made public at present. His appearance, his manner of speech, and the knowledge he displays of all sides of the political question he discusses, show him to be a man of intelligence and wide experience in Russian affairs. His identity and the political importance of his connections are vouched for by the credentials that have been exhibited to us. They are from those in Europe who are acknowledged as high in authority in the nihilistic councils, and they commend him as a thoughtful observer, an intelligent student, and a trusted worker in the reform movement in Russia. Following Hartmann's statement of his attempt to assassinate the Czar, this explanation of the present state of affairs in the Czar's dominion is particularly interesting at this moment, claiming to show fully the abuses of official power which have led to the commission of such acts as Hartmann vividly described in the *Herald* of July 30. There is a strong coloring in many of the gentleman's statements, and, like all Russians speaking of their country's wrongs, he is inclined to give his scenes a somewhat melodramatic intensity. But the very fact that he does so shows how strong are his feelings in the matter, and indicates how thoroughly honest are his convictions. The interview will prove interesting to even the casual reader, while for the political observer it is an important contribution to the nihilistic literature of the day.

"What defence do the nihilists set up for the assassination of the Czar?" said the writer, when he had been introduced to the Slavonic agitator and they had seated themselves for a lengthy discussion of Russian politics. The conversation had at first turned upon general topics connected with Russian policy, but quickly drifted to the assassination of the late Czar. "Do they consider the act as one directed against a personally innocent head of a bad system, or do they hold that the Czar was personally the responsible cause of the existing state of political affairs, and therefore deserved death for his personal acts?"

"You must let me answer that under two heads. I must explain first the general nihilistic view or defence of imperial assassination, and then the views held by

nihilists as to the Czar's personal responsibility. The entire Russian political system is absolutely rotten, and the Russian people are entirely defenceless against the cruelty, rapacity, and spirit of official terrorism exercised over them by the Emperor, Imperial Ministers, and all grades of officers of the government, high and low. The peasant or gentleman or minor noble may be under the hand and lash of a despotic gentleman or a despotic ruffian, but the social difference in his master makes little difference in the measure of his treatment, and he always feels that he is under the iron hand of despotism, which bears heavily upon him, and crushes him painfully, cruelly, continually. He has no personal rights which he can practically defend. His lands may go from him; his home be desolated; his women outraged; his bleeding feet may mark a martyr's path to the snow wastes of Siberia on the faintest suspicion of political disaffection, and yet he is practically helpless. I do not say there are no laws, but I do say that they are inoperative for the uninfluential peasant, gentleman, or noble, since he cannot set them in motion to defend himself when he is attacked by political enemies or wealthy favorites of the government. He is absolutely at the mercy of the officials who may choose to lay hands upon him and charge him with being suspected of any one of numerous political or civil crimes. In such a phase of society it has grown to be a deeply rooted belief that all means are justifiable to protect the innocent and the weak from the tyrant, and when such wounded, crushed, outraged creatures turn on their oppressors, they turn not to talk and reason and conciliate, but to act with the desperation, the ferocity, the natural instinct of outraged humanity. The act of assassination is a terrible one, and its use is to be tolerated only in exceptional cases; but even in civilized countries in remote districts where law has ceased to be regarded as a safeguard of the people the most violent measures have been necessary—lynch law you call it—to right outraged society when technically legal methods are inoperative. In a land where one's person is never safe; where one has tenure of neither life nor liberty; where the knock of the spy or police may come at any hour of the day or night; where it must be answered and the intruder admitted and allowed to examine and search everything, even perhaps the bed in which the frightened mother and babe may have been resting and rudely awakened from sleep; where men are hurried off to the prison, which closes upon them as cruelly and for as indefinite a time as did the gates of the Bastille,—in such a land, I say, you must expect to find desperate measures taken by desperate people. The result—nihilism—is the proof of the cause,

MISDEEDS OF THE CZAR.

"These are the views justifying assassination in the mind of the Russian nihilist. Now, as to Alexander II. personally. While his death was the logical consequence of a political system, he was personally responsible for a vast portion of the corruption which intensified the sufferings of the people. An unworthy man personally, he was also an unworthy monarch. He was an undutiful husband, and his immorality and that of his court were matters of outspoken European gossip and public history of the day.¹ His children were not brought up to look to the good of the

1. Only a few short weeks after the death of his wife, Alexander II., the head of the Russian Church, was publicly married to Princess Dolgorukaya, who had borne him several children during their union, which lasted about fifteen years.—P.

State, but merely to the aggrandizement of riches and power.¹ As the guardian of the public resources he squandered millions of money on his favorites and in his own follies, while the very people at his palace gates were in poverty, want, and misery. As the head of his Church he allowed scandalous corruption to exist, and the persecution and martyrdom of other denominations is matter of public history. As the head of his government he destroyed even the existing principles of equity in the holding of lands, and violated the compacts he had made with his people on his coronation. His official appointments were unwise, and were of those parasites who bled the people to enrich official purses. He engaged in costly wars, and failed in times of peace to develop the agricultural and natural resources of the Empire. Ninety millions of people were under his foot, and, strange sight in this last part of the nineteenth century, men, women, and children were turned from their farms, their property confiscated, and they driven like cattle to Siberia and the dreaded mine districts in such hordes that depots and jails on the way were over-crowded, and even vast Siberia itself threatened with over-population.² Although certain newspapers may write to the contrary, I may assure you that much as assassination is, in the abstract, held in horror, comparatively very few but his favorites and a modest band of sentimentalists cry over his death.³ Certainly we may pity him, and pity him in his fate, but when we weigh in the balance our tears for him against the tears, the sufferings, the unhappiness of a people, they go for little. His death was a terrible one, but the state of affairs he fostered was no less terrible to millions."

"But do you find him utterly bad? Do you find nothing to forgive? Do you find no good points in your memory of the man?"

"The man was not in his youth barren of good instincts. He undoubtedly had a good heart, and at first it was thought his reign would be more of a blessing and less of a curse than it proved to be. But he kept about him men trained in a despotic atmosphere, and he soon forgot the promptings of the better part of his nature, absorbed all their ideas, and even went beyond his teachers. A desire to do right is a meritorious trait, but what does it avail if not acted upon? He was thirty-eight years old when he came to the throne,—old enough to choose good advisers and shape his own policy; and while heir apparent he had abundant opportunity to learn the wants of his people. He knew the lawlessness and corruption existing in his father's government. In the first years of his reign he really did introduce some reforms, but he surrendered his principles to the military and bureaucratic clique in the court, and Russia's hope in him was gone forever. Was it the moral weakness of the man? Was it the influence of the favorites? Was it the traditional corruption and natural instincts of the Romanov family? No matter! Let us not discuss that. Russia only knows he turned back. Russian slavery was from that moment empha-

1. It is well known that the Moscow Zemstvo drew up a petition practically requesting the Emperor to dismiss his brother from the command of the army, on account of the immense swindles of the contractors, to which he was a party. An investigation was ordered, but finally quashed.—*P.*

2. Nearly one hundred thousand exiles have been sent in a single year to Siberia for political discontent alone.—*P.*

3. This statement is not literally true of the peasants. It is true, however, of the entire educated class.—*P.*

sized,—persecution spread over the land, prisons were quickly filled, the people were trodden under foot like a worm, and the worm turned !”

THE FREEING OF THE SERFS.

“Was not Alexander II. to be remembered for his noble act in freeing the Russian serf? Surely that was a bright example of his better nature. Surely, he may lay claim to Russian gratitude on the score of that liberal act.”

“There is no greater mistake in the world than that Alexander should have been glorified for that work. In the first place it was not his work in any point for which praise could be given. The freeing of the serfs was a grand idea, but was not his conception. The manner of its accomplishment was his, and that was a curse to the country. It had been spoken of, urged, and planned long before his time. It was strongly recommended and partially determined on in the time of Catherine II. It had been introduced in parts of Poland in 1788. And previous to Alexander II.’s time it was operative in Finland and the Baltic provinces. It is well remembered that previous to 1850, as well as during the Crimean war, it was a measure urged upon the government by both serfs and nobles, and strongly backed by the influence of Western Europe. In 1859, the great land owners in several provinces—St. Petersburg and others—were allowed to petition it from the Emperor,—a petition which they had long and often before desired to make, but which the Emperor declined to permit, and only exiled some of them as a gentle hint that they were too progressive. Then the Emperor appointed a committee to perfect a plan, and two years later the celebrated act of liberation was issued. So much for his claim to conceiving the idea. Now, as to whom belongs the credit of the method by which it was performed.

“This was Alexander’s, and it was accomplished after a fashion which enraged both serf and landlord, drove the two social factions against each other, and bred anger, hatred, and ill-will in the land from end to end. It bore the genuine stamp of the Romanov family in its clever diplomatic knavery and sentimental trickery. It gained the applause of Europe without really benefiting the liberated serf or the partially impoverished land owner. The landlord was despoiled of his land and paid in depreciated government bonds, and the serf was presented with high-priced and often barren land at a high rate of interest, and in being given his freedom passed from under the control of a titled master to that of the most brutal and corrupt police in the world. He was allowed to migrate if dissatisfied with the land and the terms assigned him; if he used that right he was by law paupered and lost his right to any holdings. The government paid the landlords in cheap paper—it is floating around yet, I believe, at an enormous discount—about one-quarter the value of the land, while from the serf was collected yearly an amount which aggregates more than the land was ever valued at by the original owner! The only point made in favor of the landlords was in certain provinces, where the Emperor allowed them to choose between giving without compensation to the serfs the house and land occupied by the serfs, or to sell them large tracts at a certain price. In the fertile districts the poor serf found himself endowed with a miserable hut and a barren bit of land, the land owner retaining the productive fields. In the barren districts, the landlord having the choice, of course, forced the serf to take off his hands immense

tracts of bad, sandy, barren soil at an enormous price. The government, never an easy master, having paid the landlord in bonds, assumed the duty of collecting cash instalments from the peasant, and, as the terribly powerful collector of these annual instalments, the officials came knocking at the door yearly for the rent in a fashion not to be denied, and which wrung the last coin from the miserable fellow who was supposed to be blessed with freedom and an estate. Not alone was the last coin taken for instalments due the government, but the cow on the place which fed the children, the bedding on which the mother and babe slept, the very clothing of the family, were not exempt by law from official seizure, and were in thousands of cases confiscated by the remorseless collector."

"Is it intended to repeat and repeat these imperial assassinations? That is, is it proposed to kill every Czar that comes to the throne?"

"The Romanov family has been marked with blood before, and by their own kith and kin.¹ Sons and fathers have conspired against each other; wives have risen against their husbands. If the radicals have taken family tradition into their own hands they must not be surprised. As to continuing the plan of assassination, I say let the cause continue to exist and the remedy will continue to be applied. The imperial family is numerous, and before it is extinct I think that one of its members will pause as he first ascends the throne, and will recognize the fact that the length of his days may be prolonged by simply righting the wrongs of his crushed and down-trodden people. If there is no change in the policy of the government the radicals will continue their work; and if dynamite at the throne alone will not do, owing to the influence of official obstinacy and corruption in the lesser places of the palace, then it must be applied to the remote as well as the direct cause of Russia's grievances."

"Are any political bodies in sympathy with nihilism except the lawless classes, against whom all well ordered governments and peoples are opposed?"

"You must not in your mind picture nihilists as a sort of lawless mob, a set of low-lived, red-handed fellows, uneducated and poverty stricken, who have nothing to lose and all to gain. Among the nihilists are some of the most thoughtful, the wealthiest, and best educated people of Russia. Among the disciples and propagators of nihilistic doctrines have been the most distinguished professors at the greatest universities, the most brilliant commanders in the Imperial army, the advanced and mature students of the greater colleges (and you must remember that the students are almost exclusively sons of noble houses, or the best class of Russian society), and a vast number of the nobility and gentry, as you would call them, of the country. Young Russia, that is the rising generation, among the better classes furnishes us with recruits, and they are not of such a quality intellectually or socially as should be pictured as a ragamuffin lot by any means! . As in your war of Independence the rough-coated farmer and the be-wigged and silk-coated gentleman may sit side by side, but it is because patriotism levels all ranks to a certain extent.

1. It is well known that, of all the rulers of Russia since Peter the Great, only three died a natural death: Catherine II., Alexander I., and Nicholas I. But Alexander is still said to have been poisoned, and Nicholas is supposed to have died by his own hand. All the others died a violent death, slain either by members of their own family or by their most intimate friends, not "Nihilists."—P.

Among prisoners convicted or suspected as nihilists have been some of the most elegant gentlemen in the country, the examples of the blue blood of Russia. It may seem strange, perhaps you will say, that such gentlemen should use such means as assassination to accomplish their ends; but understand that they were the only methods open to them."

"Is it not extraordinary that such heroic measures should be necessary to heal the nation's wound?"

"Bear in mind the extraordinary sight displayed to Europe to-day in Russia's Czar, surrounded day and night, sleeping and waking, by a guard armed to the teeth; his food tasted for poison; his clothing examined for concealed death; the doors to his sleeping rooms barred and bolted; the grounds picketed with troops; underground passages dug for hasty exit. Is not such a sight extraordinary, and does it not speak volumes as to the state of the country where such things are necessary? No handful of men could make such a scandalous mode of Imperial life necessary. No! It is because the Emperor knows the whole nation is aroused, and that he may expect death from any and every side, go where he will. It is no handful of murderers who are pursuing him and baffling his police. He knows they are too numerous to grasp; that they are almost countless; that every province possesses them by the thousand; that the whole nation is disaffected; that the immense army and immense police force are watching not a handful of men but the whole nation; that the Emperor may expect death at the hands of almost any one of his ninety million subjects; that dissatisfaction is so widespread that he cannot tell friend from foe any longer! Ask him, 'Is this or that man a nihilist,' and he will tell you, 'I do not know. I fear him.' Nihilistic policy is extraordinary and so is the mode of Imperial life; one and the other are necessary now; Czar and peasant are at each other's throat,—the result of long borne sufferings and wrongs."

"Was the late Czar killed by official order,—that is, was it an authorized act by the nihilist councils?"

"Yes, it was an official act. When he proved deaf to all remonstrances, several attempts on his life were made that were apparently unsuccessful, but were intended rather as warnings than really attempts to kill him. Finally official sentence was passed upon him; volunteers were more numerous than were needed; certain ones were selected; the work was planned and prepared,—you know the rest."

THE NIHILISTIC PARTY DEFINED.

"Is the nihilist party subdivided into factions, or is it a solid, compact body, governed by one head and sub-committees, with one purpose and united in every way?"

"The nihilistic body, though compact in its main organization and subject to order and control from one head, is divided into two parties or wings,—the Ruthenian and the Russian. The Ruthenian party, under Dragomanov¹, justly demands of the government equal political rights and autonomy and the language of its ancient nationality; but the non-extremists say of Dragomanov's wing that it is wrong in propagating among the people communistic ideas, such as demanding all the land, factories, and property of the present owners for equal division among the people.

1. Ex-Professor at the University of Kiev.—*P.*

The 'Russian Nihilists,' the Prince Krapotkin¹ wing, is more moderate in its aims at political reforms. They demand a general equality of political rights, actual liberty of person and opinions, political autonomy and representative government. There is no doubt that a constitution even less liberal than now demanded by either wing would quiet both, reconcile them to the government, and turn their united intelligent energy to the full and valuable service of the nation for its financial, social,* and intellectual development."

"Do the nihilists represent the majority of the Russian people, or do they represent in their opinions, but not in active workers, the majority of the Russian people?"

"All Russians suffering from the abuse of power in the hands of the government sympathize with nihilism. This sympathy is more or less cordial; that is, there are those who temper their sympathy in a certain degree, sympathizing with the ultimate ends, but not being willing to take risks nor altogether approving of every extreme measure. But the majority of sympathizers are warm supporters, and even the more timid express hearty appreciation of the courage and self-sacrifice of the unselfish ones who are at the fore in all public manifestations."

"And there is no method open to the Russian except some revolutionary proceeding to better his condition?"

"You see we have practically no means of redress for our political grievances. When you find a people destitute of such national safeguards as are afforded by parliamentary discussion, public meetings, public representation by popular vote, you leave them nothing but the unsubstantial right to petition the Emperor, which is nothing where the granting of a petition is left entirely voluntary, no matter how urgent the need of relief. There are laws, some of which on their face are protective, but they are cunningly worded, and may be construed in any way that the Emperor's appointed, not elected, judges may decide, or as the Emperor may choose. You see there is no parliament, no body of the people, which has the power to create, modify, or change laws, local or general, in any way. Laws are created simply by Imperial will. The Emperor is the alpha and omega of all law. He invites his Ministers (his appointees at will) to lay out a political scheme he desires framed; the State Council (his appointees at will) discuss it as do all good diplomatic courtiers who know on which side of their Imperial bread the Imperial butter is to be found; and the Emperor, if he continues of the same mind in the matter when these Imperial courtesies are gone through with, makes it a law by writing across it, "So be it" (*Bit po semou*). I call this ministerial revision or method a mere courtesy, because the Emperor can make a law without any such formality, but merely by his own free will."

"And how is it promulgated! Surely there must be some protection to the people in their contesting its application in certain cases as not intended to be so applied, thus bringing its interpretation before a court perhaps more friendly than the Czar's Council?"

"The law is published, and the Senate—mind you don't confuse the Russian Senate with an American Congress or an English Parliament—interprets its applica-

1. This Prince Krapotkin is a brother of the Governor-General of Charkof, who was assassinated for his excessive cruelties to the political prisoners, mentioned in the preface—P.

tion. This Senate is a mere advisory body appointed by the Czar; and if its rulings are distasteful to him, he merely orders such rulings annulled. The 'application' of the law is cunningly worded so as to be most elastic; and here creeps in a rich vein of bribery, a system nowhere so outrageous as in Russia. In individual cases the law may be made to blow hot or cold, as is wanted, and the most flagrant use of money is made, necessarily, by the accused or wronged party to save himself from an unrighteous application of the Code to his case."

"There is no habeas corpus writ in Russia, but what means of protecting himself has the Russian? He is brought for trial, therefore there must be defined rights of the accused party at that trial?"

"Practically there are no legal rights, no method of bringing an accused man to trial where the habeas corpus does not exist. Personal influence or bribery must be resorted to. A public or judicial officer can cause the arrest of any person on suspicion. Any police agent may imprison any one on suspicion, and there he remains 'until evidence is procured,'—an indefinite time, unsettled by law or custom, but dependent on individual circumstances. The simple fact is, the case is called when the officials get ready. Men have thus waited in Fortress Petrow-Pawlowsk years before trial. Men have gone to Siberia without trial. Men have been stopped on the snowy tramp of thousands of miles to the Siberian mines and simply told 'Go home.' Sometimes, after long detention in the fortress, ignorant of the cause of arrest, the doors have simply been opened and the men told 'You are free.'"

"And have they demanded no redress?"

"Why, my dear sir, they were glad to get out and be off without pausing to look back. As well might a sheep escape from a lion's mouth and think of pausing to consider how or why he was released."

"Is there any chance of the Russian people ceasing in their present demands when they find that they reach no end of their trouble, but are simply disturbing the country without gaining any decisive result?"

"Knowing the Russian people as I do, I believe they will never cease their demands for right and justice till the end is accomplished. The present state of disquietude will be continued, or a worse state of affairs will be inaugurated, if reforms are not granted. The Russian peasant is obstinate. When he gets an idea into his head he never relinquishes it. Ignorance of the possibility of bettering himself, of the means and methods by which the Czar could give him his rights and which would make him a happier mortal, was the cause of his sullen silence these many years. We are disseminating that intelligence in every province. The peasant is grasping at it. The idea that liberty is possible has been taught him, and he will never relinquish it now."

"Do you think that the Russian peasant is ready to assume control of his country; do you think he is ready to-day, after his long dependence on a centralized and despotic power, to control himself and his country were he given his political freedom? Could he govern himself with prudence, discretion, and firmness?"

"There is a class sufficiently intelligent and sufficiently numerous to guide Russia safely from chaos to order and advance her to the plane of civilization which obtains in Western Europe. But nihilists recognize the fact that it is impossible to be well governed by an uneducated class, and would therefore wisely so limit the preroga-

tives of those suddenly clothed with the rights of freemen as to insure good results and rouse an ambition in the masses to study the principles of national government, and be worthy later of enjoying its full privileges."

"Now here are a few questions I want to ask you, to which I have never had clear answers. If nihilists assassinate the Czar to terrorize the government, why do they not go further and terrorize all officials who protect him, so that he will be left unprotected? Why do they not wreak their vengeance on those who dare to act as executioners of those condemned by Imperial order to death? If, as nihilists claim, they have members in every branch of the State service, why don't they open prison doors to the assassins of the Czar instead of allowing them to be hanged or shot? The fact that assassins are caught and hanged makes us think they have not so many unsuspected members in the service as they profess, or prison doors would be swung open and important prisoners be liberated."

"I expected you would ask me that sooner or later. Now let me tell you. Bear in mind that such prisoners are confined in places guarded by strong military bodies, and that forcibly to rescue prisoners would require a large armed force such as we have not yet formed. That settles forcible rescue. Now as to secretly allowing the prisoner to escape. The slightest suspicion of treachery on the part of the guard would cast suspicion on a hundred innocent fellows as well,—poor, unhappy conscripts, torn from their homes and thrust into the ranks and forced to act as jailers. The government is relentless in such matters, and probably for the one prisoner allowed to escape, a hundred innocent soldiers would suffer cruelty, a hundred homes might be destroyed and broken up—the homes of the poor fellows who were shot or exiled on suspicion of having been cognizant of the missing prisoner's escape. This would be unjust and wrong to those who by Imperial force are conscripted from a village and compelled to act as jailers or executioners. No; the more generous method, under present circumstances, is for the man chosen to do a public deed to say, generously, 'My one life alone shall be imperiled in this affair,' and then, if caught, go to his death bravely."

"Are these assassinations ordered and some executioner chosen? And if the chosen one refused—if he refused—would he do so under pain of death from his fellow nihilists? And has a man ever so refused?"

"Yes; an informer, or a traitor to his comrades in any way, would be killed. He joins of his free will. He must naturally be true to his comrades. There have been cases where those chosen have failed to perform their duty. They were treated as any European or American army would treat deserters,—as your people would have treated Arnold; for in times of civil war or revolution, or when such a movement is being formed, necessity knows no laws. Such stories as you have read of a man confessing to the government and then committing suicide, or of the violent death of the woman who informed the police and brought them in to arrest conspirators who met in her house, are good examples of policy in such matters the world over. Traitors are always condemned to death the world over."

"Anonymous placards are posted in St. Petersburg, to which much importance is given. How is their genuine character known? Why could they not be the practical jokes of brainless students?"

"That would be a practical joke of entirely too dangerous a character. Do you

know that a man caught posting such a placard would be sent to the mines for years as one of a convict gang? And do you know that that means a slow death? No; one who has the boldness to post a placard must have the willingness to endanger his life in the act, and some higher feeling than a desire to play a practical joke must be the prompting cause before he will thus risk his personal liberty and perhaps his life."

"What is the creed of nihilism? The destruction of order? Political chaos?"

"Not at all. Nihilists do not aim at the destruction of law and order, but, on the contrary, they have well defined ideas of that orderly government which they propose to set up in place of the present Imperial despotism."

"And what is it that they demand in order to give the Czar and his empire peace at last and forever?"

"Were Czar and nihilist to meet face to face to-day to settle a treaty of peace, it would be on this basis:—

"1. A constitution framed by representatives of all classes of the people. This is not an extraordinary demand, as it has been claimed and granted in the highly civilized nations of the world.

"2. The control of national affairs by a national parliament.

"3. A provincial autonomy for provincial affairs, with a right granted each province to nominate or at least to present for confirmation local officers.

"4. The division of public unused lands among those impoverished peasants who are landless.

"5. A reform in industrial and agricultural laws, to enable poor workmen to realize fairer returns for the product of farm or trade.

"6. Religious freedom.

"7. The right of orderly public assemblages to discuss public and industrial interests.

"8. Freedom of the press within ordinary limits.

"9. Electoral conventions uninfluenced by military force.

"10. A system of public education by which, under national direction, the people would be educated, that they might rule themselves more wisely and with a more intelligent knowledge of the rest of the world, thus making good and enlightened citizens of the poorer and more ignorant classes.

"11. The reduction of the expensive army of 750,000 men to a force adequate merely to insure peace with Europe and Asia.

"12. The guarantee of personal liberty to law abiding citizens.

"13. A general detailed census, that the real distribution of inhabitants may be known and proper representation may be had, and including a statement of the social, agricultural, industrial, and other interests of each province, to serve as a basis of needed political reforms and internal development.

"14. An amnesty for those condemned for endeavoring to secure these terms for their countrymen.¹

1. Compare with the "minimum" of the demands of Professor Dragomanof in his celebrated letter to Loris-Melikof, which was answered by Melikof himself through an "inspired" article in the *Golos*.—P.

"These are demands which have long since been granted the most civilized nations of the earth, and therefore they cannot be considered as anything but a laudable political ambition, rightfully cherished by a nation of nearly a hundred millions of souls. There is not a demand in that list which would fail to enlighten, civilize, and strengthen a nation, and tend to place her on a high plane of modern civilization. The extremists are unwilling to accept a Czar, as they demand a republic; but if the Czar tendered all parties the concessions named above, the fact of an Imperial succession might be acceded by all wings of the reformers to restore peace and tranquility, thus making Russia a liberal monarchy."

"Can nihilists ever raise an army, or must they always depend on secret, underhand methods, such as they now use, to accomplish their ends? They say they have men and money: why don't they take the field with an army?"

"They are wisely cautious, and are not prepared to take the field against nearly a million of Russian soldiers. Of all things, they desire to avoid an untimely uprising, which would only result in the people being massacred and crushed down into a worse slavery. The Czar is only upheld by the support of the army, and its loyalty once tainted his power is gone. That loyalty is being undermined rapidly by nihilistic documents and agents, who are secretly explaining to the soldiers the patriotic aims of nihilism. It will not be long before you will see that the army will be disaffected. Even now it is an open fact that the Emperor mistrusts many of his chief officers and whole battalions of his men, and eventually the army will refuse to fire on their fathers and brothers in the nihilistic bands, whose only effort is, they will have discovered, for the common good of Russia and the Russians."

"If nihilists are patriotic, does patriotism call on them to undermine Imperial Russia, throw her into confusion, and thus leave her a prey to her European neighbors, who might swarm in and swallow her up on the plea that Czar and nihilist were at each other's throats and civilized Europe must intervene?"

"We are not undermining Imperial Russia and endeavoring to destroy the great country, but endeavoring to save her from self-destruction. We are not aiming at the destruction of the country, but its purification. We are patriots; we are not destroyers of the land of our people."

"Is it not more patriotic to bear the ills you have than in weakening Russia by internal warring to run the risk of destruction and conquest and control by neighboring Europe?"

"Yes, it is true that were we weakened by internal warfare our kind neighbors might endeavor to despoil us of some of our provinces. Prussia, for instance, has long wanted some of our Baltic provinces; but let me assure you that were we invaded from a European direction we would show a solid front to inquiring friends from over the border, and national enthusiasm would unite us temporarily to repel foreign advances. Even the Polish people, who have been hardly treated by the Russian government, would join in such a national movement. The repelling of a German invasion would only help the nihilistic cause, for it would show the people what they could do by united action. United and in the field to repel Germany, we would reform Imperial Russia before we disbanded."

THE SPY SYSTEM.

"The Russian spy system is very extensive. Are nihilists always under surveillance when abroad?"

"The Russian spy system is very extensive and very expensive, and nihilists are always in danger at home, and must feel when abroad, if they are men of any prominence, that though free from arrest they are never from under the eye of a Russian Imperial agent. The immense Russian spy system extends all over the European continent, and largely in America too; and Russia pays more for spys than she does for her entire national school system. Some persons of the best society residing in foreign cities are paid spies of the government; and some of the most distinguished and charming ladies of the best society of the European capitals are partially supported from the Russian treasury, and wine, dine, and entertain those whom they report afterward to St. Petersburg."

DESCRIPTION OF AN ARREST.

"Please suppose a man arrested for a political offence or on suspicion. Please describe what would be the whole proceeding,—how arrested, searched, imprisoned, and tried. And what could his friends do to get legal advice and assist him?"

"From an arrest to a verdict is a process so rapid that I can describe it in five words,—suspected, arrested, searched, imprisoned, and almost invariably condemned. Result,—shot, hanged, or exiled, either one of the three effectually wiping the victim from the face of the earth; the first two being the most merciful methods are less frequently resorted to. An important point to remember is that on conviction the property of the accused goes to the Imperial treasury to defray expenses of further arrests. Mere suspicion sets the process in motion. Where the slightest suspicion exists the police pour into the house of the family tainted with ideas of freedom, and the suspected ones are arrested,—aged father or mother, the son of the family or the daughter just budding into young womanhood, it makes no difference who; it is enough that the household are suspected. Oh, I assure you there is no sentimental regard for tenderness of youth or gentleness of sex. The iron hand of Imperial Russia clutches at the white throat of a woman as readily as at the muscular neck of a man. The house is ransacked from top to bottom. Every corner is searched. The reading of family letters is run through with. A half hour is devoted to the examination of personal effects, the individuals are searched,—the very clothing of that pale, terror stricken, half fainting girl standing there in the middle of the room under official eyes, which are rudely hunting for hidden documents or letters. The agony is soon over. A case has been made up and accused and accusers are gone, and whoever has gone forth with them—father, mother, son, or daughter—it may safely be counted upon will be seen no more in that desolate home. Official courtesy has allowed sufficient time for a hasty embrace, a wild cry of anguish as parent and child are separated,—a word of parting, and the police have gone with the 'victim of suspicion.' That is the arrest. Now for the trial. Trial may be deferred indefinitely at the pleasure of the government, while the victim remains in prison. Delays are frequently aggravated by the venality of officials, interminable red tape of the Russian official system and official laziness. Where the old system of jurisdiction prevails the military Governor appoints a court of civilians and military officers.

The case is tried, and, whatever the verdict, the governor modifies, changes, or reverses, as he chooses, increasing or lessening the penalty. Where the case is simply one of suspicion, merely based on the report of the police that the person is 'suspected,' the Governor has the right to send the person for a term of years to the eastern part of Russia and defer the trial for future developments."

RELIEF STATUTES A DEAD LETTER.

"A reform was attempted in the trial of political offenders by juries, but after Vera Zassulitch's acquittal it was decided by the government that where jury trials were not terminated satisfactorily to the government, a special court could be nominated and the party tried over again. You see what a farce such a pretence of justice proves. With such powers you can see how the government can nullify the effect of any statute on the books when a suspected person attempts to defend himself."

"But is there no appeal?"

"There are laws as to appealing from these decisions, but they are inoperative except when the victim has money or influence to support his appeal. There are methods of appeal which involve an outlay of money beyond the means of nine-tenths of Russia's subjects, and there is the farce of an appeal to the Emperor. But do you suppose the Emperor would reverse the decision of his appointees? Or do you suppose it ever reaches him,¹ or that ten Emperors could hear the appeals of the hundreds of thousands doomed to exile or to local prisons? No; there is but one relief,—bribery. And the cursed system having been once established has proven so rich a revenue that it has fastened itself on the people from end to end of the Empire. Where arrest and condemnation are easy, and officials who can reverse decisions are open to bribery, arrests and condemnations multiply, and venal officials take good care to keep control of so lucrative a business. Relief statutes are therefore dead letters in Russia."

"Is it expected that there will be any immediate alarm in the Imperial household? That is, do you expect any startling news at once?"

"Public events may transpire which will hasten the movement of the Executive Committee, but there is no method of knowing their exact programme. There is one chance that the Czar has—a slim chance, perhaps,—which may give him some hope that the present, dangerous as it is, is less dangerous than the immediate future. His coronation day is at hand."

"What important significance has that?"

"On that day the Czars are accustomed to declare before their people some Imperial policy, some needed reform, perhaps, to mark their coronation day; and these paper promises are usually intended to catch the applause of attentive Europe. There are those among the Russian people who still believe that Alexander

1. In "Vperiod!" Vol. V., published by Lavrof in London, are to be found heart-rending petitions from unfortunate soldiers sent by their deputations to the Emperor. On the margin of these petitions is found the order: "Arrest the petitioners, put them in chains, and send them home with military escort." Some of the petitioners came from Orenburg to St Petersburg, a distance of about 1000 miles, in hopes of getting justice from the Batushka-Gossudar, the "dear father."—P.

III. may, aware of the fact that the eyes of the world are on Russia, mark the coming coronation day with some new political departure. This hope is but a slender thread, a hair, but it may suspend over his head for the time the nihilistic sword until the day has passed. It is only perhaps, merely perhaps; but meanwhile nihilistic plans for expected emergencies will proceed."¹

SIBERIAN EXILE.

"We hear constantly of Siberia. Every time an anti-imperialist has anything to say against the government it begins and ends with a reference to Siberia. From all this one would think that half the Russian population was there already and the other half was on the way. Yet the Imperial government denies that the number of exiles as stated by the radicals is anything but a wild exaggeration."

"And if you hear so constantly of Siberia it is because it is the land of torture of hundreds of thousands of Russia's best people, from which a cry of anguish is forever going up to heaven,—a cry for mercy and pity and relief from a life that is a long, living death.

"Do you wonder that the world should hear constantly 'Siberia,' when the very word has so terrible a meaning in thousands and thousands of Russian homes? You see a desolate home; where are its former inmates? The answer is 'Siberia.' A deserted farm, with its rotting fences, its deserted buildings, its bramble grown fields; where is the owner? He was a well-to-do farmer, but he was 'suspected,' and was sent to Siberia. You see a pauper mother in that hovel by the roadside, struggling to keep her hungry little ones from death; where is her husband? He was a good, honest peasant, and a dutiful husband, but—he is in Siberia. Why is that old man toiling in the fields at his advanced age? Where are the sons whom I saw tilling those fields last year, while the honored father, in peaceful old age, sat by the fireside of his home? The police agent could not make out a good case, but he 'suspected' those young men. They are in Siberia, however, where they can do no harm. Surely that girl, that one with the young but pale face, is not the mother of those children? No; she is their sister; the mother died last month. She is trying to keep the children together somehow or another till father comes back. He was taken away one night last winter and is in prison somewhere; but she hopes he will come to them some day, and the neighbors are good to them when they dare, she will tell you. She does not know it, but her father will never return. He is in Siberia. When he went there he lost his name; he is only an unknown number. No letter can ever reach him. Who is that blind man sitting in that hut, while that poor half-starved woman works in the field? He was in Siberia. He was a well-to-do man at one time; a student of Kiev University. He wrote some pamphlets of a too liberal disposition. He was convicted under Heaven knows what charge, and was in the mines for a long period. After almost living in the bowels of the earth burrowing in the mining pit, he was suddenly transferred to another part of the country. The transfer a blessing? It was a curse. The five hundred mile march over the glittering snowy roads was too much for his weakened eyesight. He was

1. Alexander III. has since unmistakably shown that he has chosen the policy of repression. His death sentence has accordingly been passed.—P.

blind on the last hundred miles and has not seen the light of day since. But he finished his ten year term and dragged himself home.¹

"There are 441,840 victims. Do you wonder you hear all Russians speak of Siberia when so large a proportion of their countrymen are there? And do you wonder that Russian Imperialists seek to conceal the enormity of the disgrace which the convict population of Siberia is to the Imperial house of Romanov? Do you remember that Loris Melikof allowed about 100,000 to return home who were exiled on 'suspicion,' or because they were guilty of only minor political offences? That act will give you some basis to imagine the true number of exiles in the late Czar's reign. Nearly 10,000 Russians were sent annually to the eastern provinces of Siberia or the awful island of Sachalin, where life is almost impossible, and were sent almost without the farce of a trial. Another most striking exhibition of government cruelty is the martyrdom of unhappy Poland, from which Alexander II. sent:

"8,000 (about) to the mining works in Siberia.

"31,000 to hard labor on military roads or fortresses.

"33,000 to the north deserts.

"2,400 to the army for life.

"620 to prison, where they died.

"1,420, including 19 priests, to execution, all of whom were shot or hanged.

"8,800 banished from the country without right ever to return.

"112,600 forced to change their habitation and scattered over Russia and Siberia, their homes destroyed and their families left without support.

34,000 shot in the revolution of 1861-63, for which I hold Alexander II. responsible, as by his bad faith with the Poles he incited them to revolution.

"The tragedy accompanying the last persecution of religious denominations in Lithuania is a matter of history. Five flourishing villages—Jaworowka, Jaworzuc, Lukswiec, Pruszanki, and Lukowo—were burned and levelled to the ground, and about 300,000 souls were driven from their homes and scattered over Russia and Siberia, because they insisted on publicly retaining the faith of their fathers.²

"These facts and figures are appalling; but you must remember that when an irresponsible despotism uses the sword or decree of exile indiscriminately in a nation of 90,000,000 people, one per cent. of the population presents the heroic figures of 900,000 victims. Do you wonder, remembering the fact that self-preservation is the first law of nature, that a people under such suffering, and finding that no laws such as obtain elsewhere in the civilized world are operative in their behalf,—do you wonder, I say, that they turn in their desperation upon their oppressors, and, having no present means of dignified warfare, strike at him who has thus tortured the nation, who by one sentence of command, by simply writing '*Bit po semou*'³ across an Imperial ukase, could right the wrongs of his outraged people and restore peace and happiness throughout the land? What would Americans do were such a state of affairs existing here to-day? Would they submit to it, no matter to what means they

1. It is hardly necessary to say the narrator had here in mind pictures from life.—P.

2. Compare with this the statements made by the correspondent of the London *Daily News* concerning the imprisonment of the Old Believers. The *Daily News* cannot be accused of hostility to the Russian government.—P.

3. "So be it."—P.

were obliged to resort? Were their homes outraged, their families scattered into exile, their fathers, sons, brothers shot down mercilessly when a revolution was attempted; were they overpowered and held down under the iron hand of Imperial despotism, and tortured by a brutal, ruffianly police, and aggravated to the last degree through an ever present spy system, and were they unable to take the field in open warfare, what would they do? Cut off from all other means, the whole nation would individually constitute itself the destroyer of the despot. Every man's hand would be raised against the heartless, merciless ruler, and he would be stricken down at his post by the first hand that could reach him, raised, not as that of a vulgar murderer, but raised in the name of the righteous indignation of the whole people, as was Judith's in the camp of Holofernes. And why should we bear passively that which you could not endure? Are not we of Russia men as well as you? Are we not of flesh and blood as well as the rest of mankind? Have we not the feelings, the sensitiveness to physical pain and moral wrongs that all humanity possesses? Then do not be surprised that, after struggling helplessly against oppression for years and years,—waiting, longing, hoping, yet never realizing these hopes,—we have now grown desperate. At last we have determined to destroy if we cannot otherwise ward off the Imperial hand that has been raised cruelly against our homes, our wives, our daughters, our sons,—against ourselves, and has claimed a right even to measure the limit of our physical existence."

It was early evening when the writer had been introduced to this Russian nihilist; time had run on rapidly while listening to his earnest defence of the creed and deeds of his fellow radicals, and it was close on midnight when the interview was concluded and the representative of the *Herald* withdrew. As he passed down stairs to the main hall with his new Russian acquaintance, voices were heard in an adjoining room.

"You see it is not time to sleep yet; we have work to do to-night. My friends are here waiting for me. We have news from Europe to-night that will keep us busy until morning. We turn night into day; but that is our political creed. We are endeavoring to turn Imperial night into the bright sunshine of day in Russia, and we shall succeed in the end." Saying which, he laughed pleasantly and bid the writer good night.

THE CONDITION OF RUSSIA.

[*Editorial comments of the New York Herald on the preceding interview.*]

Hartmann's narrative of the Moscow mine recently published in the *Herald*—the story of a small group of men and women laboring together for many months with an energy, courage and devotion that implied a heroic motive, to kill one man against whom they have no impulse of merely personal hate, to destroy one who is not their enemy except in the sense in which they regard him as the enemy of every man of their country,—presents in a striking light the present condition of Russia. It is not uncommon for men and women to do greater things than Hartmann and his associates have done or perhaps will do, judging them by ordinary moral standards of what is great; but men cast themselves upon that condition in life in which they abandon homes, friends, fortune, prosperity, a legitimate career, all the social restraints, and accept the fate of outlaws and hunted enemies of the government, only under the impulse of conceptions far removed from those of ordinary murder. It is tolerably plain to the world now, we suppose, that the nihilists of Russia are in no degree analagous to those mere dregs of society that in other countries are called the criminal classes. They are men and boys of good family; they come from the noble families and from the universities. Their intelligence, tenacity, and courage stamp them as superior men of their breed, and it seems scarcely reasonable to suppose that such persons take to such attempts unless they honestly conceive themselves under heroic and patriotic obligations.

Are they all and altogether deluded in respect to these obligations,—in respect to this supposed necessity that a time and an occasion have come when they should freely devote themselves to death or to a worse fate for the sake of freedom and the salvation of their country? Our readers may get some ideas on this point by a careful perusal of an interview with a nihilist which is printed in to-day's *Herald*. It is an interview written not at all on the level of the ordinary interview. It is not a hasty collection of shallow questions and indefinite answers, as so many of the current interviews of the days are. It goes satisfactorily over the whole field of those relations of the Russian people which in other countries would be called their political relations,—that is, the relation of the people to the government,—shows what the government is and what the people are, presents the tendencies of each, and sketches the relation to all these of that common idea of the humanity of the period, a liberal or progressive party. Indeed, it is up to the level of a superior investigation of the political condition of a country upon which the attention of the world has been concentrated for now many years in the endeavor to understand this remarkable phenomenon of a party which rose without, so far as the world at large could make

out, any known cause, labored without any known purpose and always by the most barbarous methods, as if in this it merely glutted a sanguinary and savage passion of hate.

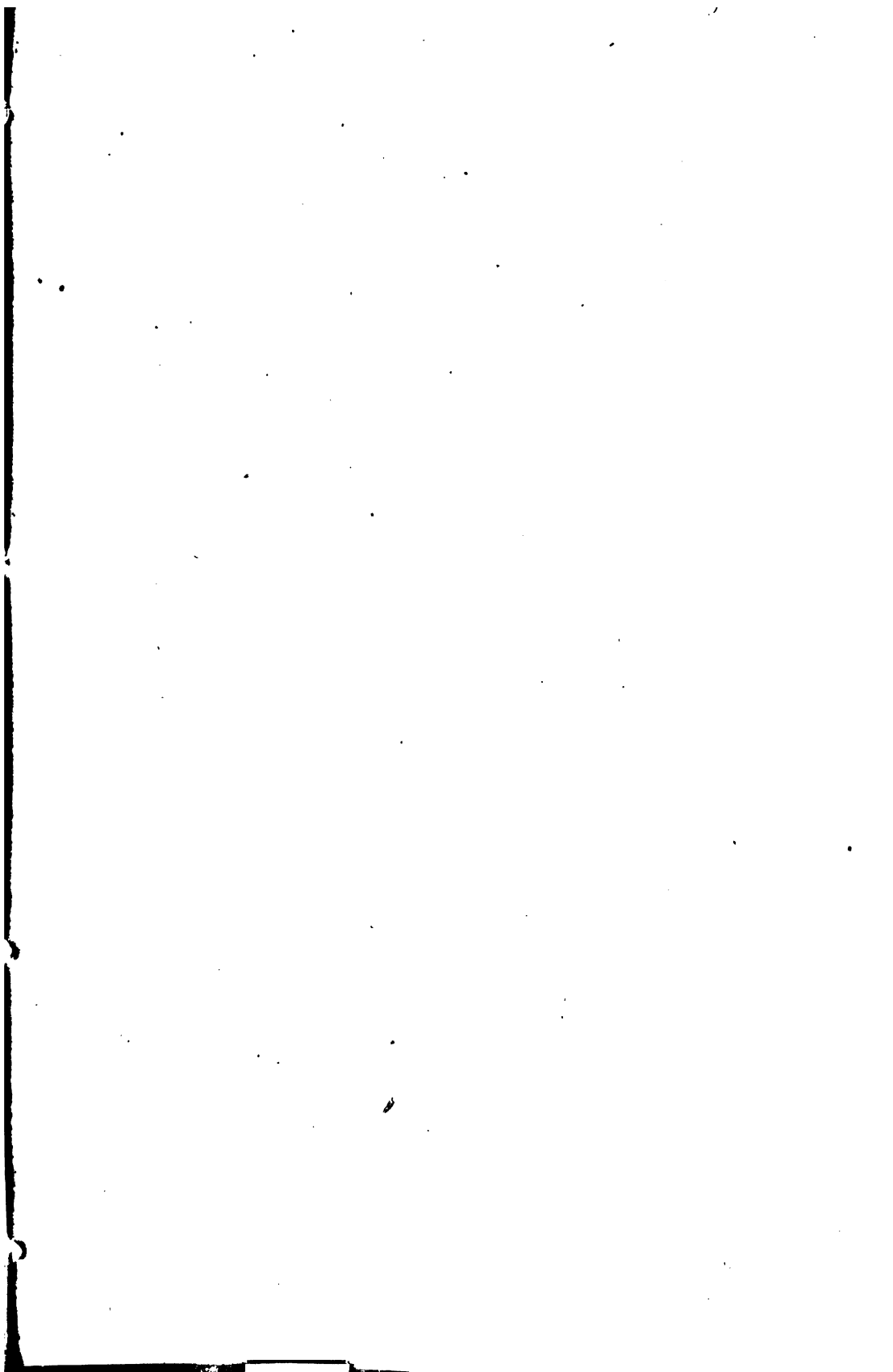
Careful perusal of this enlightened conversation must convince the thoughtful reader that nihilism is not a merely murderous conspiracy. Allowance must, of course, be made for the fact that the exponent of the case of the nihilists in this dialogue is himself a nihilist, saturated with all the passions, convictions and faiths of a party that is face to face in a death struggle with the most uncompromising tyranny in the world. Such men, while they may have little enthusiasm in them, have at least so desperately concluded that all that is opposed to them is evil, that they cannot comprehend how honest-minded men can hesitate to support them, and hence leap somewhat recklessly to the conclusion that all honest-minded men are of their party. There may be some of this exaggeration in the view given by our nihilist as to how his party is made up; but his presentation of the case represents that nihilistic Russia is simply "Young" Russia, to use that style which has been common in the revolutionary movements of the countries of Western Europe. In this view the nihilists are in Russia all those men who in France would to-day be republicans or in England liberals; all the intelligent, thinking people of the nation; all the ardent and aspiring young men who are to be the life of the next generation; and all the energetic and capable men of mature years who in the present generation desire a fair field for their exertions in commerce, industry, finance, and wish that they might be able to rest for the defence of their rights upon equal laws honestly administered. All the peasant population which treasures against the Imperial government the fierce grievance that it gave it a delusive liberty allied to a vast speculation and corrupt jobbery, freed it from a territorial lord to put it under the dominion of the police, bound body and soul by an exorbitant debt for the land with which it was supposed to be endowed; all the land owners who, while they lost their laborers and their land, acquired only a swindling equivalent in paper promises; every element of the population that has at last been educated to the opinion that all misery and wretchedness are due to the Czardom,—all these are nihilists, if we may believe what is said, while the active portions of the party are only an executive committee of this mass.

If this statement of the limit and relations of the party is true, it is hardly permissible to say that the nihilists are deluded as to the conditions of their country and the remedy for the evil. Every people must be supposed to be capable of deciding points like these for themselves, or we must abandon some of our most cherished theories in politics. Few things in the world could be more widely separated than the Russian Imperial theory of government and our popular theory; and if the Czar is now about the only man in Russia who maintains the one with the vast financial and military machinery of a great State, and the Russian people are fighting for the other, though only with a dagger and an occasional fulminating bombshell or mine, then certainly the conflict will go on to a final solution, because one of these systems is the system of the past, the other is the system of the future. And the conflict itself has been no more distinctly a product of the progress of time than will be the victory of the popular system. By this of course we do not mean that Russia is to step in a year or generation from an autocratic to a republican or even

fairly representative government, but it must move in that direction or become a waste. Modifications of the system are now the forced necessity of any safety, and a Czar to govern or even to live must henceforth make conditions with somebody, and those with whom he is thus forced to make conditions divide his supremacy with him from that moment. Absolute power grew in its day and it must decay in its day. It is not a pleasant spectacle to see one king baited by a nation; but if a king can stand in no other attitude save with his foot on the nation's head, such a spectacle is natural if not pleasant.

If any responsibility is to be assigned for this conflict in Russia, it must be put upon those who made Russia a European State; who introduced the western ideas, the Western civilization, the Western theories of human rights and political organization, the Western idea of the establishment of government upon modern and practical standards. In Asiatic isolation the Czars might have held on in autocratic pomp for generations and centuries; but the neighborhood and communication of the active life of Europe are too much for such a system.

DEC 24 1881





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